

The SEED

SPRING 2022



Transformation: 5-Years Later

“The most challenging part about going to Seeds was not giving up (and I wanted to — a lot), but the best part was that NO ONE WOULD LET ME.”

PAUL MLADY (2017 GED Grad) tried at least 4 other GED programs before finally finding Seeds.

“They were HORRIBLE,” he said. “For the people running those programs, it was just a job. They didn’t really care. If I didn’t catch on fast enough, it was clear that I was bothering them asking questions.”

By then he was frustrated – and his wife knew it. If not for her, his GED journey might have ended there. But she saw Seeds on the news, and he reluctantly agreed to give one last program a try... for her.

THE DIFFERENCE WAS OBVIOUS, FROM THE VERY FIRST DAY

“I dragged myself down to Seeds West, only to find out I couldn’t start at that very moment,” he said. Finding out he had to return for orientation on Monday only added to his frustration.

But since he was already in the building, Site Coordinator Chris Richards showed him around and explained how the program works.

That changed everything.

“I noticed it right away. *It was different.* It wasn’t like those other places I tried,” he said. “The one-to-one was the first thing I saw and it *felt* different.”

He might not have come back to orientation if not for the individual attention he received on that very first visit.

He attended tutoring nearly every day, logging 595 lifetime instructional hours in pursuit of the GED.

“If **every** education program was run the same way as Seeds, there’d be no dropout rate in this country. The one-to-one attention, the obvious caring, these are the things **that make a huge difference.**”

5 YEARS LATER...

A lot has changed for Paul since he passed his GED in 2017. He has a better sales position, and moved forward with more confidence because he’d achieved his goal. The better job led to better finances. He and his wife have paid off their house and they are talking about buying a second home.

But the changes don’t end there. Paul didn’t just change jobs, he changed his *entire lifestyle*. Once 350 pounds, he said the staff at Seeds won’t recognize him now. He’s shed more than 100 pounds since graduating. He gets up at 4:30 am and heads to the gym 5 days a week. Sometimes he also goes again after work with his wife.

Paul drinks coffee now. He never did before coming to Seeds, but long hours of studying, the abundant supply of free coffee in the classroom, and tutor Bob Lyle made him a believer in the power of caffeine.

When he’s not working his job in auto sales, the grandkids keep him busy. There are 5 of them now, with #6 due July 2022. Even though 3 of them live in California, his wife makes sure there are always children around by running a licensed daycare out of their home.

He also plays harmonica in a progressive rock and blues band. “We have sat in with some pretty cool musicians in the past. But now we just get together and play for fun,” he said. “All original music, no covers,” he added.

And, on occasion, he enjoys a good glass of whiskey and a nice cigar with the boys.

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This article is an excerpt from a longer interview. Read more about why Paul originally left high school, what made him want to go back, and how some of his favorite tutors at Seeds helped him. Full article at WWW.SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG/BLOG

Dear Friends,

This fall, we held our first in-person event in TWO YEARS - *Thrive! 2021*. No one was more excited than me. I LOVE seeing everyone together in one place and the energy that produces. (*Zoom fatigue is a real thing!*)



BONNIE ENTLER,
PRESIDENT & CEO

I think our guests felt the same way. We had a wonderful turn-out and everyone was so incredibly generous.

I'm even more excited for our spring event: *Dueling Pianos!* If you've never been to a Seeds event, or experienced live, dueling pianos, you are in for a treat. The Music Box Supper Club honored our original reservation the start of the pandemic. Great event, wonderful lakefront location, and a great cause — what more do you need? Details are on the back of this newsletter.

And finally, the event I am looking forward to the very most: An IN-PERSON GRADUATION CEREMONY! Our graduates were robbed of an opportunity to walk with classmates when they left high school, and this is their chance. We'll also live-stream the event so our Virtual students and tutors can join in.

From the Classroom:

Each day, student attendance grows at Seeds East and West, and the Virtual Classroom continues to expand exponentially. Conversely, our tutor numbers dwindle as the world reopens and volunteers return to their workplaces.

If you or someone you know has the time to give, we'll provide the training. We continue to do everything in our power to maintain the one-to-one learning experience that is so critical to the success of our students.

~ Many thanks, BE

MOURNING MORE LOSSES

PAULA PEALE (West) was energetic, smiley, and most importantly, committed to completing her education. We learned of her passing from COVID in January.



EDDIE CLARK (East) passed away in his sleep in February. He was a fixture in the morning class and a member of Book Club, with a positive attitude and a big smile. *



NOTES THAT MAKE IT WORTHWHILE



Azalia Reyes, a 33-year-old Texas mom (and Virtual Classroom GED Graduate) absolutely made our day when we received her email.

"I have waited for 15 years to finally say that I am a high school graduate. I have waited my entire life for this feeling, this day, this excitement to say I DID IT.

I just want the world to know how grateful I am for Seeds and how you are changing the world ONE STUDENT AT A TIME.

Today I am a new person. Today I see the world in a new light. Today I feel like the world is with me. And today my kids will know what it is to achieve their dreams and live them out."

To prove they believed she could do it, the staff even paid for her final section of the test.

"Thank you thank you thank you...I cannot say that enough, thank you for the push that I needed to just do it...I love you guys and this program has been life-changing."

Her enthusiasm caught the attention of a casting director. She and her family recently participated in a PSA about adult education. *



SIGNATURE EVENT RETURNED

On November 12, Seeds held its first in-person event in nearly two years. Guests wore Seeds of Literacy masks to *Thrive! 2021*.

The inaugural Cultivator Impact Award recipient **Bill Litzler** (2018) introduced 2021 honoree **Rich Clark** (right) for his dedication to the education of students of all ages.

But it was the classroom testimonials that had guests hanging on every word.

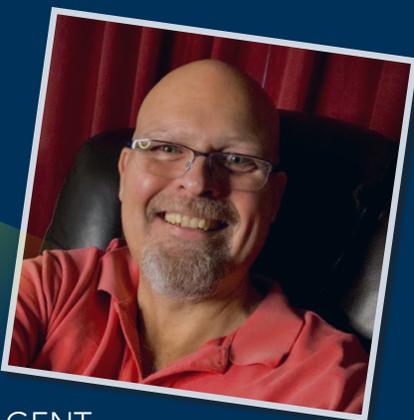
Seeds East student **Jack'ee Johnson** (center) spoke about her experience with the tutoring she's received at Seeds. Due to a last minute cancellation, her young son was able to attend and see just how many people support his mom's journey to her GED.

Tutor **Bruce Kowalski** (left) views education as a worthy investment, and shared anecdotes about the students he's tutored.

The event ended with an auctioneer-style call to action: Sometimes \$10 (the cost of a test section in Ohio after the state's voucher is applied) is all that stands between a student and the GED. Combined, guests donated the equivalent of 800 test sections!

This year's *Thrive!* was the most successful fundraiser to date. Nearly \$100,000 was raised to support adult education. *

Watch all of the speeches and check out our photo essay online.



TUTOR SPOTLIGHT

ROB PYLE MICHIGAN'S MATH FREE AGENT

Rob Pyle may live in Michigan where he works as an engineering supervisor at Ford, but in his spare time, he tutors in Ohio...virtually.

Rob used to tutor locally in Michigan, but his program there closed due to COVID. That program's loss was a huge gain for Seeds, and gave Rob the flexibility he'd been craving.

"I was looking for more of a drop-in group like Seeds," he explained. "My previous tutoring experience was with one student, on-site. I had to reserve a three hour time block each week but my student canceled often." He appreciates that no time is wasted at Seeds because there's always a student that needs help.

THE BEAUTY IN NUMBERS

He's a popular tutor among both the staff and students because he has something that's often in short supply: a love of math. Rob's an engineer. He's married to an engineer. His two children are engineers. Math might as well be a requirement in his family.

"I enjoy teaching concepts that then make the mechanics of solving problems easier. Getting a student to understand the concepts and reasons behind the equation is the best feeling," he said. "My goal is to have students enjoy and see the beauty in numbers and math, rather than see math as an impossible foreign language that they will never understand."

Rob describes himself as a bit of a math free agent. Sometimes the staff will have a specific student for him to work with. Sometimes they wait for someone to log in who needs math. (They never wait long.) During his first nine months tutoring, he estimates he's worked with 25 different students.

"He's always a great sport if we call and ask him if he can volunteer more time if we're short tutors in the VC," Site Coordinator Melina Lindsey said. "He's a math whiz, so I know that any student I pair him with will be in good hands – whether the student is just getting started with Seeds, or is a few days away from taking their math GED test."

According to Melina, "When a student he worked with twice a week for several months graduated, Rob logged on to our virtual graduation ceremony even though he was on vacation so he could show his support."

LEARNING GOES BOTH WAYS

It's not just the students at Seeds learning from Rob – Rob has learned from Seeds.

Until the tutor training, he had not considered how many people drop out of high school and the shame that many of them experience as a result. Learning how hard many people have it and how hopeless school felt to them as a teen was very eye opening, he admitted.

The training covered a concept that stuck with him: students are often "should" on. Well-meaning teachers, tutors, and family members mistakenly tell students what they SHOULD be doing, rather than trying to understand why the student needs something different. "It's a good lesson to remember," he said.

"I'm continually astounded by the optimism and positivity from the staff," he said. "I'm always welcomed [to the Virtual Classroom] enthusiastically, and I enjoy watching the coordinators interact with the students and tutors as the [tutor/student] matches are made."

Rob said tutoring is the best thing he's done in years, and finds fulfillment having a role in helping people believe in themselves and improve their lives. He encourages everyone to give tutoring at Seeds a try. "I bet you'll find it easier than you fear and more fulfilling than you can even imagine," he said.

BECOME A TUTOR

Seeds always needs tutors, both locally at Seeds East and Seeds West in Cleveland, as well as in the Virtual Classroom nation-wide.

Training for new tutors is offered monthly and Seeds offers regular, ongoing professional development workshops.*

SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG/TUTOR



ACCOLADES AT EVERY LEVEL

STATE

In addition to delivering the keynote address, Dr. Carmine Stewart received the Administrator of the Year Award from the **Ohio Association for Adult & Continuing Education (OAAACE)**. Chris Richards received Instructor of the Year.

NATIONAL

The Library of Congress presented Seeds with a Best Practices Award.

LOCAL

For the second year in a row, **Community Solutions** named one of our tutors a Most Treasured Volunteer. Congratulations to tutor Ed Round!

GLOBAL

In the last issue, we told you about our recent **ProLiteracy** awards.



IN THE NEWS

WKYC CLEVELAND

Reporter Maureen Kyle checked in with Seeds students and staff via Zoom for "Getting GED Goals Back on Track with Seeds." The segment aired in October.

To watch all of our media coverage, visit SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG/NEWS.



“ Rob Pyle is and always will be my absolute favorite tutor! He brought math down to the level where I could understand, and then some. If you are struggling with MATH he's the guy to reach out to. His enthusiasm and down-to-earth personality will make it feel as if he is physically right there with you every step of the way! ”

~ Azalia Reyes, NEW GRAD
(opposite page)



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OUR MISSION

To provide free personalized education that empowers adults to thrive in our community.

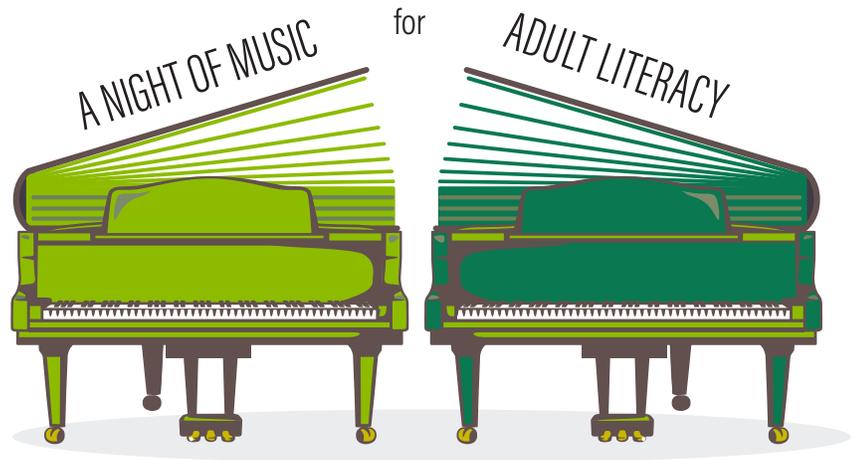
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Dueling Pianos

Thursday June 9 6pm - 9pm
 Music Box Supper Club



We had to cancel in 2020, but we are excited to announce our **Dueling Pianos: A Night of Music For Adult Literacy** event is back on! Theodore "T" Edward Dyleski and Richard "Rich" Gallo (*T and Rich Dueling Piano Show*) have been delighting Cleveland audiences since the days of the Howl at the Moon Saloon and they'll perform for YOU June 9 at the Music Box Supper Club.

Join us for an interactive evening with the duo in support of adult literacy.

For more information, tickets, and sponsorship packages, visit our website at WWW.SEEDSOFLITERACY.ORG/DUELINGPIANOS2022



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